

SFA Update

ISSUE 1

The 2nd Time Around—SFA 2002 To Measure Employee's Attitudes About NOAA

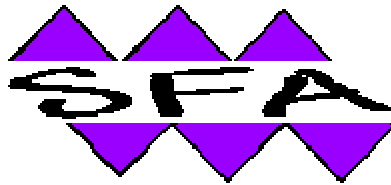
As the song says, "the 2nd time around is better than the first time!" NOAA is about to follow up on the 1998 Survey-Feedback-Action (SFA) with a 2002 effort that will have some new wrinkles—namely a shorter survey and its availability online. More on that in an upcoming *SFA Update*....

The SFA Process involves an all employee **SURVEY** which is designed to capture the perception of employees on a variety of work areas. Information from the survey will be shared with employees via the **FEEDBACK** process and workgroups will develop **ACTION** plans to address those issues for which they have control over. The survey will include questions about NOAA's reward and recognition processes; team work; communication; training and career development; fairness and treatment of employees; supervision, etc. A critical

aspect of SFA is that the survey is fully confidential and your anonymity is guaranteed.

The organization that will assist NOAA with SFA 2002 is SIROTA Consulting. SIROTA will input all responses and generate individual workgroup reports which will provide your specific workgroup with data you can use to develop action plans to improve your work processes and work environment. Reports will be issued at each organizational level and NOAA-wide reports will help address systemic issues.

NOAA management is fully committed to the SFA process. They realize that SFA is a tool that will help identify the practices that either help or hinder us in becoming an organization where all employees are able to reach their full potential. NOAA's leaders understand that by



"Improving our organizational productivity and quality of worklife"

creating an inclusive environment productivity and customer satisfaction will increase. Participation is voluntary and again—confidentiality and anonymity of your input is guaranteed by the way the data is gathered and reported.

Take advantage of this opportunity to tell us what you think. Be part of this initiative to optimize the potential of current and future NOAA employees and thereby enhance our mission's effectiveness. With everyone's unique insight we can identify opportunities to improve our ability to do our job!

Improvements Abound From Initial SFA Conducted in '98

When we asked for input from NOAA's Line & Staff Offices regarding "success stories" as a result of SFA '98, well—we got a lot back! Here's what we heard: "At least one office is developing a plan to ensure that there is compatible software within the office to enhance internal communications. Many of-

fices have also developed intranet sites with shared folders for posting and sharing common information to keep employees up-to-date on office activities. Correspondence, minutes of meetings and briefings, policy changes, weekly and monthly reports on administrative and program highlights, training opportuni-

ties, Director and deputy directed postings, as well as technical exchange forums are posted on the intranet sites." Another reported: "Use of contracts, summer interns, and cross-utilization of staff has helped to offset hiring constraints. (cont. on Page 2)

SFA '98—QUICK HITS

NOAA Response Rate	70%
Satisfied w/Job	49%
Satisfied w/Supervision	62%
Satisfied w/Work Envir.	60%
Satisfied w/Rewards	47%
Satisfied w/Comm.	51%
Satisfied w/Org. Meas.	41%

WHAT'S HAPPENING NOW:

- *Line/Staff Offices, Unions and Employee Groups Are Providing Feedback on the New Survey Instrument*
- *The New Survey will contain similar dimensions from the '98 SFA so that NOAA can benchmark its progress*
- *Once the Survey is finalized, NOAA's employees will be provided with much more information about actual survey administration, feedback reports and workgroup efforts.....STAY TUNED!!!*

Workgroups Critical to SFA

The purpose of SFA is to improve the quality of worklife in NOAA to better enable us to accomplish our mission and professional goals on individual, group, and organizational levels. The only way that can happen starts with you, your co-workers and your manager: the workgroup. Every supervisor in NOAA will have an SFA feedback meeting with their workgroup

Success stories that you will read about in this and upcoming SFA Updates are direct products of the dynamic which happens in the workgroup discussion efforts. Ideas, issues, complaints, problems—they serve as the root for solutions which are either resolved within the work-

group or elevated for further discussion/resolution by higher levels of management. In a nutshell, the Feedback Meeting is designed to provide a forum for workgroup members to interpret the survey results, to identify successes and areas which need improvement, and to develop a process for action planning. The starting point for this discussion will be your Workgroup Report which contain the results of your workgroup's survey responses.

During subsequent meetings workgroup members will develop

action plans to resolve issues which are within their control and elevated action plans for higher organizational action. The action plans represent the workgroup's "strategic plan" - a document which serves as a baseline for improvement with the goal of creating the optimum work environment.

Remember, your opinions will be voiced during the survey phase - and those opinions will be your discussion material during your workgroup session. Contribute to your workgroup effort by completing the SFA survey!



Workgroup Feedback Sessions are the Key to Improvement

Improvements From SFA '98

Cont. from Page 1

One Program Office created a coordinator position to oversee functional teams within headquarters staff to facilitate cross office planning and to provide greater and more efficient administrative support to the programs." More feedback: "Regarding time and attendance, the office had a facilitated session involving managers and a subset of the staff that was most unhappy with the situation that pertained to them. The facilitated session enabled the participants frankly air their feelings. This

provided a great opportunity to experience "where the other guy was coming from." It also was the beginning of a series of individual dialogs between staff and management that continue to today. Revised office-wide

T&A policies are pending." And: "Flexiplace Program policy has been developed, managers have been trained, and the policy is undergoing modification." We could list

many other positive experiences, but wanted to give you a glimpse of what we received.

On a more global scale, NOAA has acted upon those issues raised in SFA '98, such as communication by instituting a new online employee newsletter called "AccessNOAA"; improving upon employee recognition through the creation of a NOAA Employee and Team Player of the Month; and in general, the introduction of the Employee Work-life Center which offers NOAA employees a suite of services nationwide on balancing work and family needs. Another significant result of SFA '98 was the Best Practice Award—see below for details!

*Action from Survey
Feedback Action—The
Real Stories*

SFA's Dimensions.....and Their Best Practices

The SFA examines many dimensions of your worklife: Rewards; Training; Innovation; Customer Focus; Leadership; Fairness; Communication; Employee Involvement; Use of Resources; Work Environment; Supervision; Teamwork; Strategic Planning; Organizational Measures; and, EEO. In the column above, we shared with you success stories that addressed a variety of these dimensions. In upcoming *SFA Updates*, we will continue to share with other accomplishments as a result of SFA.....

One innovative result of SFA was the Best Practice Award, where supervisors are recognized for displaying outstanding leadership competencies in creating an inclusive and model work environment. Unlike traditional awards which are bestowed by "upward" management, the Best Practice Award is contingent upon a complete consensus from the supervisor's workgroup who collectively nominate

their supervisor through a narrative which addresses the criteria necessary for a Best Practice Award. In a little over one year, there have been close to 25 Best Practice Awards—all hand delivered to the recipients by our Acting Administrator and Deputy Under Secretary, Scott Gudes. Indeed, Scott has been a champion of this award and has recognized the uniqueness of an award that is a testament to proven leadership excellence.

The Best Practice Award does not end with a presentation—each award continues to serve as examples of supervision and behavior to emulate. The Diversity Council website contains a Best Practice webpage which lists each recipient and their specific best practices as described by the nominating workgroup. Please check it out and see what managers are doing—here at NOAA—that are making people very happy to be working here! The website URL is www.rdc.noaa.gov/diversity.html

As the plaque on the Best Practice Awards reads, let's do our best to "walk the talk."

